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THE KOLA PENINSULA: THE STRONGEST SOVIET NAVAL BASE (KOLA-HALBI--ETC(U)
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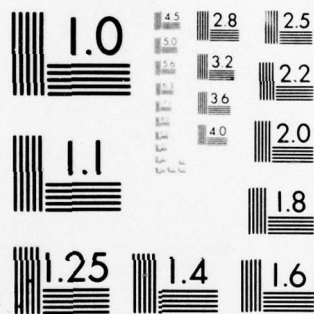
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The Kola Peninsula: The Strongest Soviet Naval Base

[Breyer, Siegfried. Soldat und Technik, No. 1, pp 30-37;
German]

Northern Fleet

✓ Of the four Soviet fleets, ~~that~~ ^{the} stationed in the north is the most powerful. Admiral of the Fleet, G. M. Yegorov, the CinC, has at his disposal more than 230 surface units (not counting auxiliary ships), about 170 submarines (of which almost 100 are nuclear-powered), and 320 aircraft and helicopters. Overall, this force represents 15.6% of all available Soviet surface ships, 43.5% of the submarine fleet, and 22.5% of naval air forces. Also among the surface naval forces is the ASW carrier KIEV; although the 45 YANKEE and DELTA class nuclear powered submarines with their long-range ballistic missiles stationed there are far more important. These units represent two-thirds of the Soviet SSBN potential; the remaining third is with the Pacific Fleet. Thus, the Northern Fleet is the most powerful of all four Soviet fleets. This is quite understandable, since it is only from this area that operations against the vital sea lanes between the United States and Europe are possible. ↗

In an emergency situation the preliminary round could be won in the North Atlantic. For, if the Soviets succeed in interdicting these lines of communications and in blocking reinforcements and supplies, the lights will go out in Europe sooner or later. The more the maritime relative strength shifts in favor of the Soviets, the more the present Western defense strategy becomes questionable. Still, the situation is not hopeless. The Soviets, too, have their problems--namely, in far North Europe. The Northern Fleet is based on the Kola Peninsula, in a region that has considerable geographic disadvantages. Aside from the adverse climatic conditions it is the northern geographic position of our Norwegian treaty partner that is predestined to block free access to the North Atlantic. A western defense emanating from here has a real chance of succeeding. The enemy can not only be denied access to the Atlantic, but up to two-thirds of his seaborne nuclear potential could be seriously threatened. Northern Norway must therefore seem like a lock bolt to the Soviet military, frustrating their plans. That they will attempt to bring this bastion under their control in an emergency is a certainty.

What does the Kola Peninsula look like? What are its natural geographical regions? Where are the Northern Fleet's bases? What are the lines of communication? Whoever attempts to answer these questions will soon learn that general information about this area is very scanty. This is because the Soviets have been shielding the almost uninhabited Kola Peninsula from view and have, to a good extent, declared it a restricted area.

The Kola Peninsula, which is almost entirely north of the Arctic Circle, has an area of about 100,000 square kilometers and a west-east axis of a little more than 400 kilometers. The line running from the Kola fjord through Lake Imandra to the Kandalaksha Bay serves as the western boundary. In the north it is bounded by the Barents Sea, and in the east and the south by the White Sea. Its highest elevations (up to 1200 meters above sea level) are in the west. In the north one encounters almost exclusively steep coasts, while in the south the peninsula decreases in elevation. The Kola Peninsula is favored by the Gulf Stream. Thanks to it, about 250 kilometers (beginning from the present border with Norway) of the Murman coast, limited geographically by Cape Svyatoy Nos, remain navigable in winter. Icebreakers are only required on an average of 50 winter days. The temperature differential between the northern and southern parts of the peninsula is, therefore, substantial. In the north a January average of -5°C prevails, while in the south it is -14° (July average temperature is 8° in the north, but 14° in the south). But along this 250 kilometers of coast only in the west and only on about 90 kilometers of coast are there naturally useable harbors. The most important of them is the Kola fjord which cuts into the peninsula about 60 kilometers deep in a north-south direction. On the eastern side of the fjord, about 50 kilometers from the open sea, is Murmansk, a city that counted fewer than 10,000 people in the 1920's but which had grown to over 300,000 by the early 1970's. The population of Murmansk has doubled since 1939. It is a major city in an unusual location, 200 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, with Zelenyy Mys in the north and Kola in the south, each a few kilometers away. Today they probably form an administrative entity with Murmansk. Murmansk is the focal point of the fishing and fish-processing industry (there were already about 500 fishing boats stationed there in the 1960's) and has two shipbuilding yards, chiefly for nonmilitary ships. The food and metal industries there are also important. A well known Institute for Fishing and Oceanography, as well as an intermediate and higher maritime school, must also be mentioned. The harbor has water depths to 18 meters, permitting the passage of ships of all sizes. The port has been greatly expanded since the mid-1930's. At that time there was just over 1000 meters of wharfage, permitting only about 7 to 8 ships to be handled simultaneously. The trans-shipment volume was correspondingly low; in 1932 it was 800,000 tons.

The intensive development became especially needed during the Second World War when the western allies delivered untold war materials

by sea, most of which was transshipped in Murmansk. Supplies valued at almost 40 billion dollars landed there and in Arkhangel'sk in the period from 1941 until the end of the war, including 14,700 aircraft, 7000 tanks, and 375,000 trucks. Just 15 kilometers to the north, also on the eastern shore, is Severomorsk, the former Vaenga. An arsenal has been developed here in which the nuclear-powered submarines of the Northern Fleet probably receive their ballistic missiles. The main headquarters of the Northern Fleet is also located there. The real base of the Northern Fleet is Polyarnyy, however, situated on the western side of the outer Kola fjord, just 20 kilometers from the open sea. This port was built before the First World War, when it was called Aleksandrovsk. Its waters are deep enough to accommodate ships of all sizes. It is assumed that many naval installations, both for submarines as well as for smaller surface units, have been built into the rock formations there and are so protected.

In the vicinity, likewise on the western shore, a repair yard called Rosta had been built for naval ships apparently even before the Second World War. The most important land link to the Kola Peninsula is the Murmansk railroad (called the Kirov railroad since 1935). It originates in Leningrad and has a length of 1459 kilometers. It was begun late in the last century but by 1914 it had only reached the western shore of Lake Onega. Early in the 20th century, owing to the rising tensions with Japan, priority was given to the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad while all other undertakings took a lesser position, including the line planned for Murmansk. Its completion was needed after the outbreak of the First World War in order to transport the countless supplies of war materials delivered by the western allies to Murmansk to the interior, and from there to the fronts. Work to complete it began in 1915. Under the most severe conditions German and Austrian prisoners of war were forced to perform the killing work. Many perished from exhaustion, hunger, and cold. Only in this way was the roughly 800-kilometer stretch able to be operational by the end of 1916. Today this has been developed into a double-tracked line, the route profile has been improved, and large segments of the line electrified. Before the Second World War it had been extended to Polyarnyy, and after the war to Pechenga and Nikel' to aid in the exploitation of the rich mineral deposits of the Petsamo district that Finland had to cede to the Soviets according to the 1947 Paris Peace Conference. The second important land link is the 1410-kilometer-long road that essentially runs parallel to the Murmansk railroad.

No less important to the Soviets' northern naval strategic position are the regions bordering or adjacent to the Kola Peninsula. The Rybachiy Peninsula is situated to the west of the Kola Peninsula, and still further to the west--30 air kilometers to the Norwegian border--is the port city Pechenga, the former Finnish Petsamo, chiefly a fishing port but also militarily important, situated on a 15-kilometer indented ice-free fjord. The White Sea, a shelf sea of the Arctic Ocean, washes the Kola Peninsula itself. This sea is relatively shallow.

On the average its waters are 60 meters deep, maximum depths reach 330 meters. Two important ports are situated on the White Sea; Arkhangel'sk on Dvina Bay in the east and Belomorsk at the mouth of the White Sea-Canal in Onega Bay in the west. Arkhangel'sk, situated for the most part on the right shore and on islands in the delta of the Northern Dvina River, had 300,000 inhabitants in the mid 1960s and is one of the largest Soviet river and ocean ports. Arkhangel'sk in both world wars was just as important a transshipment point for allied aid deliveries as Murmansk. The timber industry of this city, which employs about 75% of the working population, is very important. The city also has meat and fish plants, some ship repair yards, scientific institutes, and a maritime school of international renown. A railroad, which runs to Moscow and which is linked to the Murmansk line, joins Arkhangel'sk to the hinterland. Belomorsk is much smaller. The White Sea Canal (formerly the Stalin Canal), which was built in just 20 months by mostly political prisoners during the Stalin period, terminates here. It runs between Lake Onega and the White Sea, having a length of 227 kilometers. The differences in elevation are overcome by means of 19 locks, each supposedly 115 meters long, 15 meters wide, and 8 meters deep. It is said that this waterway can accommodate ships of 3000 DWT and 4.5 meters draft. The White Sea Canal is connected to the internal Russian canal system through which the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea can be reached. Although the White Sea Canal, like the White Sea itself, is unusable 5-6 months per year because of winter freeze, it is, when optimally utilized, important in many regards, if only for the reason that transport ships can be dispatched along it to places they are needed.

Of the greatest importance militarily is the town of Severodvinsk (called Molotovsk until 1957). The actual hub of Soviet naval shipbuilding, Yard Nr. 402, the largest at the disposal of the Soviet Navy, is located there. Before 1941 the keels of super battleships were laid down there. Today Delta Class nuclear submarines, among others, are built there. By virtue of special construction measures operations there can be maintained throughout the year despite the lowest winter temperatures. Severodvinsk is not far to the northwest of Arkhangel'sk. It is connected by a 45-kilometer-long branch line with the railroad to Arkhangel'sk. In the early 1970s Severodvinsk already had more than 140,000 people. The overwhelming number of all workers in Severodvinsk are employed in the enormous shipyard. The remaining workers are in machinery manufacturing, construction materials, and the food industry. The yard capacity is large enough to be able to build 8-10 nuclear submarines per year and very likely a number of smaller units as well.

The new ships built in Severodvinsk undertake their first plant trials in the White Sea. The first test dives of the submarines probably take place there as well. During the months when the White

Sea is navigable, there is bustling activity. The units of the Northern Fleet, most of which are unquestionably built in Severodvinsk, take their first steps in the White Sea until they reach the point when their real trials can take place on the high seas. After successful conclusion of the trials the ships are fitted out in Severomorsk.

This northern point of the Soviet Union is also the point of departure for sailings to the Far East along the Northern Sea Route during the summer months. The Soviet Union has been striving for years to increase the effectiveness of this route.

Western defense specialists estimate the military strength on the Kola Peninsula at at least 100,000 men, including armored units. Western observers believe that more than 1000 aircraft are stationed there. If these figures are correct, then this part of the Soviet Union, too, has garrisoned a far greater military potential than that required for defensive warfare. There are many indications to suggest that this force concentration is intended to bring northern Norway under Soviet control immediately in the event of a conflict and thereby remove the lock bolt of European defense. It is public knowledge that the Soviet Navy has already exercised this operation. During the worldwide Soviet fleet maneuvers "Sever" in 1968 and "Okean" two years later, large scale amphibious operations were carried out along the Murmansk coast. Norway is threatened like never before in her history.

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CAPTIONS

- Fig. 1. View of the North Dvina and Arkhangel'sk
- Fig. 2. View of a section of the commercial port of Murmansk in winter (This photograph is more than 10 years old.)
- Fig. 3. The Navy Air Force has at its disposal a number of the many airfields on the Kola Peninsula. This photograph shows Be-12 CHAYKA amphibious reconnaissance aircraft (NATO designation MAIL) shortly before takeoff.
- Fig. 4. A powerful group of Northern Fleet surface ships and submarines operate constantly in the Norwegian Sea (between Spitsbergen, Iceland, and northern Norway). Photograph shows a Soviet naval group with cruisers in the background and missile destroyers in forward position.
- Fig. 5. The amphibious components of the Northern Fleet are not yet shared by the other fleets, probably because they are just being developed. Presently there are 2 large and 12 medium-sized landing ships as well as 2 landing transports, while smaller landing craft and ACVs still seem to be lacking. This photograph shows a group of amphibious units, consisting of an ALLIGATOR and 2 POLNOCHNYs, protected by surface ship forces.
- Fig. 6. The Northern Fleet and Arctic shipping have numerous icebreakers at their disposal. The newest, ARKTIKA, is the largest and most powerful.
- Fig. 7. The Barents Sea is the firing range for Soviet submarines. They test their missiles there. This photograph shows the firing of a ballistic missile from a submerged submarine.
- Fig. 8. The deeply indented natural harbors of the Kola Peninsula offer good hideaways. The rock formations are even believed to have built-in bunkers for the submarines. Photograph shows a NOVEMBER Class nuclear submarine departing a base in the north.
- Fig. 9. During the worldwide fleet maneuvers of 1968 and 1970, the North Fleet practiced amphibious warfare along the Murman coast. Western defense analysts see this as a test penetration of Norway. Photograph shows such an exercise involving an ALLIGATOR Class ship landing tanks ashore.

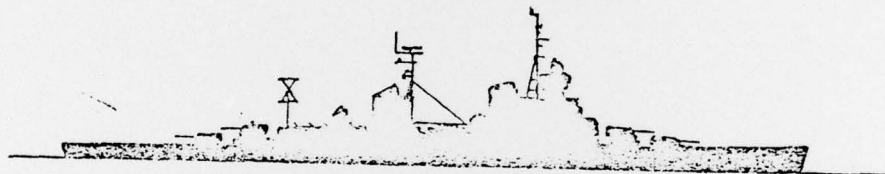
/Original article also contains maps of the north European part of the Soviet Union and of the Kola fjord area./

NORTHERN FLEET STRENGTH

Stärkeübersicht
der sowjetischen Nordflotte



1 Flugzeugträger
Aircraft carrier



2 Kreuzer
Cruisers



7 FK-Kreuzer
Missile cruisers



11 FK-Zerstörer
Missile destroyers



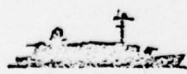
11 Zerstörer
Destroyers



32 Geleitzerstörer
Escort destroyers



12 FK-Korvetten
Missile corvettes



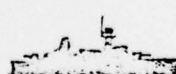
25 FK-S-Boote

Missile boat



20 Torpedo-S-Boote

Torpedo boat



20 U-Jäger

ASW boat



10 Wachboote

Patrol boat



40 Hochsee-Minensuchboote
Ocean-going minesweeper



25 Küsten-Minensuchboote

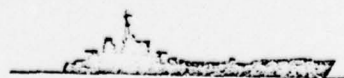
Coastal minesweeper



1 Minenleger
Mine layer




2 große Landungsschiffe
Large landing ships




12 mittlere Landungsschiffe
Medium landing ships




2 Landungstransporter
Landing transports



Missile subs (40 nuclear-powered)
 45 U-Schiffe mit ballistischen FK
 (davon 40 mit Nuklearantrieb)



Long-range subs (28 nuclear-powered)
 68 U-Schiffe mit großem Aktionsradius
 (28 mit Nuklearantrieb)



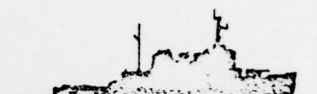
Nuclear-powered icebreakers
 2 Atom-Eisbrecher



Subs with antiship missile (30 nuclear-powered)
 42 U-Schiffe mit Seeziel-FK
 (davon 30 mit Nuklearantrieb)



Medium-range subs
 18 U-Boote mit mittlerem Aktionsradius



Icebreakers
 11 Eisbrecher



70 Jagdbomber und Bomber
 Fighter bombers
 and bombers



75 Tank- u. Transportflugzeuge
 Tanker and transport
 aircraft



100 Aufklärungsflugzeuge
 Reconnaissance
 aircraft



75 U-Abwehr-Hubschrauber und -flugzeuge
 ASW helicopters